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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [RS](#) [KJUS](#)  
SUBJECT: KASHIN PROTESTS, BUT NOT TO EMBASSY OR MFA

11. (SBU) Aleksandr Kashin, who was paralyzed from the chest down as a result of a 1998 traffic accident involving then Consul General in Vladivostok Douglas Kent, traveled to Moscow on March 3 where he reportedly continues a hunger strike, apparently initiated to draw attention to his plight and to indicate his frustration with what he sees as a lack of response from the USG. According to press reports, Kashin took up residence at the Hotel "Zvezda" accompanied by a nurse in order to meet with his US-based lawyer, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Russian media. As of March 6, he has not/not contacted the Embassy, nor has he been in touch with the MFA.

12. (SBU) While reportedly rejecting a U.S. offer of a USD 100,000 humanitarian payment (as reported by the press, but not officially communicated to the USG by Kashin or his lawyer), Kashin has sought to re-kindle public interest in his case. He began a hunger strike on February 18 and claimed that he is living only on water, according to press reports. (Our consulate in Vladivostok reports that local press stories suggest he suspended his strike while recuperating in a local hospital.) According to the newspaper Pravda, Kashin complains that he has not had a response to his letters to President Bush, Secretary Rice or Assistant Secretary Fried and claimed he would continue his fast "until he dies or until his demands are met" -- he continues to seek a payment of \$10 million in "moral damages."

13. (SBU) A Vladivostok lawyer told the Russian press that Kashin may have grounds to appeal to the GOR for assistance, since the MFA accredited Kent as a foreign diplomat and is therefore responsible for Kent's actions while in Russia. Officials at the MFA's North America Department on March 4 were unaware of any legal plans by Kashin to seek GOR financial support. In a separate conversation on February 29, MFA North America Director Igor Neverov acknowledged the difficult situation that Kashin's hunger strike posed for the U.S. and welcomed efforts to find a "humanitarian package" for Kashin. Neverov noted the affair is problematic for the GOR, since a Russian citizen had been crippled by an American diplomat, with no apparent legal relief on the part of the U.S. The MFA's preference is to keep this issue low-key, but Neverov recognized that the prospect of Kashin re-engaging with the national press may preclude this.  
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